

Care To Listen Equality Policy

Aims of the Policy

At Care To Listen equality of opportunity is one of the central principles underlying all our work. We are committed to eliminating all forms of oppression including those based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religion or belief. We understand that the presence of discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation in the workplace can lead to low staff morale, poor health and wellbeing, low productivity and an oppressive workplace culture. We are committed to ensuring that, as a minimum, our standards reflect the requirements of the law (i.e. Equality Act 2010 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and any associated Codes of Practice.

The principle of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity applies equally to the treatment of staff, volunteers, visitors, clients and suppliers.

It is intended that this policy will help us to meet our obligations by:

- Making our equal opportunities ethos clear to staff and service users
- Setting out clearly what we will do to ensure that our service is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation of any kind and how we will meet legal requirements
- Ensuring that all staff and service users are made aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities within the service, including behavioural standards and expectations.

Access to the service

The service accepts clients according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria set out by in the service's operational policy. Care To Listen will never restrict access to the service on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religion or beliefs or on the basis of any protected characteristic defined the Equality Act 2010. Any members of staff found doing so will be disciplined in line with the process outlined in the Staff Handbook.

Care to Listen will ensure that our services are equally accessible to all and appropriately serve the needs of a diverse client base. Service users are issued with a diversity monitoring form at their first appointment. The organisation will use this information to ensure that the diversity of client intake is what would be expected in line with the inclusion criteria applied by Croydon IAPT, and reflective of the make up of the local population as a whole. The service has fully accessible premises at St Mildred's Centre in Bingham Road.

All service users are made aware of the organisations' complaints procedure at their first appointment; if a client feels that they have been a victim of discrimination, harassment or victimisation as a result of using the service, they are entitled to register their concern by making a complaint.

Equality in Recruitment

Care to Listen encourages diversity in its workforce and welcomes applications for employment from all sectors of the community. The organisation is committed to ensuring that there is equality of opportunity in recruitment, selection and job allocation. To achieve this, the organisation will:

- Ensure that job opportunities are widely publicised so as to encourage applications from a broad range of suitable candidates from all backgrounds

- Always select candidates based on ability, qualifications, experience and suitability for the role
- Ensure that applicants for employment are not disadvantaged by any policy, process or condition of service which cannot be justified as necessary for operational purposes
- Ensure that the selection process is carried out consistently and fairly
- Ensure that no applicant is treated less favourably than another because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
- Use diversity data to identify underrepresented groups and actively seek to recruit from these communities

Treatment of Staff and Organisational Culture

Care To Listen acknowledges and values the diversity of its workforce, and is committed to developing a working environment that embraces this diversity. The organisation strives to achieve a culture where everyone is treated with fairness and respect. Our aim is to ensure everyone is able to contribute and develop to their full potential.

In order to challenge and eliminate all types of discrimination, the organisation will:

- Ensure that all employees are aware of the organisation's equality and diversity policy and take action to inform and educate appropriately
- Ensure that training, development, and promotion are accessible to all and that performance management and appraisal systems are fair, objective, and free from bias and stereotyping
- Support an environment where harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation are not tolerated, and ensure that Care To Listen's refusal to accept such behaviours is integral to the organisation's culture
- Undertake to consider the impact on diversity when developing or changing our policies and practices
- Undertake regular reviews of diversity data and this policy to maintain progress and to actively address areas where improvement is necessary
- Investigate all reported incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation fairly, robustly and in confidence, taking the appropriate disciplinary measures where necessary

Care To Listen staff and volunteers can expect to be:

- Treated with dignity and respect and valued as an individual
- Entitled to work in an environment where harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation are not tolerated, and where any concerns or complaints about unfair treatment are investigated fairly and objectively

- Recognized for their attainments in fair and unbiased reviews
- Given fair access to training, development, progression and selection in line with the needs of the organisation and their personal aspirations
- Encouraged to give feedback on all aspects of their work and receive an active response to their ideas and input
- Entitled to expect their managers to set a positive example by ensuring fairness and equality amongst staff and the services they are responsible for and by ensuring that their own behaviour supports the organisations' commitment to diversity
- Entitled to expect that their managers take positive action to deal with any instances where the organisations' commitment to diversity has been undermined

In turn, all staff and volunteers will be expected to:

- Support Care To Listen's commitment to diversity to eliminate behaviour and actions that undermine that commitment
- Accept personal responsibility for their behaviour and conduct and be aware of its impact upon others
- Treat all colleagues and clients fairly, impartially and without prejudice
- Respect and value colleagues and clients as individuals and not make judgments or assumptions based on stereotypical views
- Give open and honest feedback to clients, colleagues or the organisation, which is appropriate and in good faith
- Take up any opportunities offered to influence workplace equality practices, including completing diversity monitoring questionnaires and engaging in diversity training
- Seek specialist support (from managers, service directors or external organisations) if they experience discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation
- Challenge and where appropriate report discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation if they personally experience or witness it occurring.

Reporting Procedures

Any member of staff who believes they have been subjected to discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment has the right to seek redress. It is hoped that staff will address all such issues informally with the Service Directors prior to making a formal complaint. The Service Directors will take every step to resolve any such problems at an early stage.

In the event that matters are unresolved staff are entitled to submit a formal grievance to the Service Directors. Complaints should be made in writing and the grievance procedure will be followed (see staff handbook).

The grievance procedure provides a formal method for an individual to take up a complaint with the management. The object of the procedure is to restore harmony to the workplace, and ultimately ensure the efficient operation of the organisation.

Volunteers making a formal grievance should state it in writing and pass it to either service director who will then investigate the facts in detail, interviewing all parties involved as necessary. Every effort will be made for staff involved in a grievance to resolve the matter at each stage before proceeding to the next. A grievance may be referred back to the previous stage if it is believed there is any possibility of resolving the issue at a lower level.

Care To Listen will treat all incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation seriously. Failure to comply with the behaviours outlined in his policy will lead to investigation and may result in disciplinary action being initiated which could, in serious cases, result in dismissal.

Useful links

www.acas.org.uk

www.equalityhumanrights.com

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

This policy will be reviewed annually.